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author's intention is to write stinging criticism of our social order rather than to pillory a human type. Interest in Mahmoud flags somewhat when one perceives in him the modern captain of industry, and the captain of industry escapes rather lightly in our minds because Mr. Belloc, influenced no doubt by the subtle Oriental atmosphere which he has effectively breathed into his story, and by the unmoral connotations of the whole fable, has written not after the fashion of scathing and unescapable satire, but rather in the mood of jovial cynicism. Such, at least, is the effect produced by this ingenious fiction.

WATCHERS OF THE SKY. By Alfred Noyes. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company.

The undoubtedly poetic nature of the theme makes it difficult to reconcile oneself to Mr. Noyes's comparative failure in the series of poems in which he essays to celebrate the triumphs of great astronomers. Certainly the story of the transmission of knowledge in any field has the appeal of heroism and that of mystery. Elevation we might expect to find, and this without the metaphysical element which commonly enters as a somewhat disturbing factor into the effect of poetic grandeur. The one thing upon which men, almost without exception, are nowadays agreed is the value and dignity of science and the inestimable debt that we owe to the pioneers in this field. But Mr. Noyes, inspired versifier as he often is, does not seem to be the poet sent in answer to McAndrew's prayer for a man "like Bobbie Burns" to sing of the real things of life.

Though his opulence of phraseology and his very considerable colorfulness and vigor have not deserted him, Mr. Noyes seems far from fully realizing the larger values of his subject. The thought of patient research and noble self-devotion is indeed repeatedly expressed, yet it scarcely seems to inform the whole poem. Especially does one note a lack of that ability, so conspicuous in Browning, to keep the reader in a state of excitement over the dramatic developments of thought and over the discovery of its essential unity. Even the author's remarkable skill in narrative verse appears to be here a snare in that it leads to dilution. The metre, moreover, and to some extent the manner, are Wordsworthian, and seem not so well suited to the record of scientific achievements as to a poet's philosophizing.

But the real failure is the absence of anything like an epic effect. Apparently the abundant opportunities for atmosphere, for description, and for incident, have led the poet unduly to sentimentalize his theme. As a case in point one may advert to the weak poetizing about Tycho Brahe's dwarf, Jeppe—a piece of business faintly reminiscent of Scott!

In consideration of Mr. Noyes's real gift, it is somewhat painful to have to conclude that the whole work is of the nature of household poetry, pleasantly thrilling, mildly instructive and elevating, but far from great.